

Current Projects - Rivers and Streams

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Angler Response to Stream Rehabilitation Practices in Iowa

Over the past several years, there has been increased interest in modifying and removing aging, low head dams on Iowa's interior rivers. This interest is driven by safety/liability concerns, deterioration of existing dams, and a desire to increase river recreation opportunities. Areas below dams are often popular fishing locations. One common concern about dam removal or modification projects in Iowa is that they will negatively impact angling, particularly below the dam. The impact of dam removal or modification on angling has not been studied in Iowa, and there is little information on this topic available from other states. Solid information on the impact of dam removal and modification on angler use, catch, and harvest is needed to inform decision makers for future projects.

A whitewater park and habitat improvement project has been proposed at the site of the Marion Street Dam on the Maquoketa River in Manchester, IA. Plans call for the partial removal (~5 ft.) and modification of the dam, and building of five additional structures that will create whitewater features while also allowing fish to pass upstream. The project is also expected to improve angler access and fish habitat at the site. A roving creel survey was initiated in April 2012 to collect pre-project data on angler use, catch, and harvest on the Maquoketa River upstream and downstream of the dam. Anglers will be surveyed during the months of April-October for at least two years prior to construction, and two years after construction. The 2012 survey found that angler effort was highest in May (1,529 angler hours) and lowest in October (23 angler hours). Total catch was highest for smallmouth bass, common carp, and walleye.

Measuring the impacts of a dam modification or removal project in Iowa will provide information that will help managers address angler concerns with future projects. This information may also help to identify project features which benefit anglers that can be incorporated into future projects.

